Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the instant application:

Listing of Claims:

1.   (Currently Amended) A method of dynamically and automatically adjusting a speech output rate to match a speech input rate, comprising the steps of:

        receiving a speech input;

        computing a speech input rate from the speech input;

        determining whether a type of speech output to be provided at the speech output rate is text-to-speech or recorded speech output; and

        dynamically adjusting the speech output rate to match the speech input rate, wherein the speech output rate is adjusted based upon the type of speech output;

        wherein, if the type of speech is recorded, determining whether alternate text is available, and if alternate text is available, counting the alternate text available from a recorded output and determining an audio file length to compute a default output rate which is used to adjust a recorded output rate to match the input speech rate.

2.   (Cancelled)

3.   (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the method further comprises the step of adjusting a rate of text-to-speech synthesis to match the speech input rate if the type of speech output is text-to-speech.

4.   (Cancelled)

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5.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim [[4]] 1, wherein the method further comprises the step of obtaining an output word count from a transcription of a recorded speech output and determining an audio file length to compute a default output rate which is used to adjust a recorded output rate to match the input speech rate when the type of speech is recorded and alternate text is unavailable.

6.   (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of compute the speech input rate comprises the step of computing a running average of the rates computed for the last n utterances of the speech input.

7.   (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the method further comprises the step of feeding back an estimate of the speech input rate to a speech production mechanism to adjust the speech output rate.

8.   (Currently Amended) A system for dynamically and automatically adjusting [[an]] a speech output rate to match [[an]] a speech input rate, comprises:
        a memory; and
        a processor programmed to receive a speech input, compute a speech input rate from the speech input, determine whether a type of speech output to be provided at the speech output rate is text-to-speech or recorded speech output, and dynamically adjust the speech output rate to match the speech input rate, wherein the processor is programmed to adjust the speech output rate based upon the type of speech output, and wherein the process is further programmed to determine, if the type of speech is recorded, whether alternate text is available, and if alternate text is available, to count the alternate text available from a recorded output and determine an audio file length to compute a default output rate which is used to adjust a recorded output rate to match the input speech rate.

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9.   (Cancelled)

10.   (Previously Presented)   The system of claim 8, wherein the processor is further programmed to adjust a rate of text-to-speech synthesis to match the speech input rate if the type of speech output is text-to-speech.

11.   (Cancelled)

12.   (Previously Presented)   The system of claim 8, wherein the processor is further programmed to obtain an output word count from a transcription of a recorded speech output and determine an audio file length to compute a default output rate which is used to adjust a recorded output rate to match the input speech rate when the type of speech is recorded and alternate text is unavailable.

13.   (Original)   The system of claim 8, wherein the processor is further programmed to compute a running average of the rates computed for the last n utterances of the speech input when computing the speech input rate.

14.   (Original)   The system of claim 8, wherein the processor is further programmed to feed back an estimate of the speech input rate to a speech production mechanism to adjust the speech output rate.

15.   (Currently Amended)   A machine-readable storage, having stored thereon a computer program having a plurality of code sections executable by a machine for causing the machine to perform the steps of receiving a speech input, computing a speech input rate from the speech input, determining whether a type of speech output to be provided at the speech output rate is text-to-speech or recorded speech output, and

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dynamically adjusting the speech output rate to match the speech input rate, wherein the machine-readable storage is programmed to <u>cause the machine to</u> adjust the speech output rate based upon the type of speech output<u>, and wherein the machine-readable storage is further programmed to determine, when the type of speech is recorded, whether alternate text is available, and if alternate text is available, to count the alternate text available from a recorded output and determine an audio file length to compute a default output rate which is used to adjust a recorded output rate to match the input.</u>

16.   (Cancelled)

17.   (Previously Presented) The machine-readable storage of claim 15, wherein the machine-readable storage is further programmed to adjust a rate of text-to-speech synthesis to match the speech input rate if the type of speech output is text-to-speech.

18.   (Cancelled)

19.   (Previously Presented) The machine-readable storage of claim 15, wherein the machine-readable storage is further programmed to obtain an output word count from a transcription of a recorded speech output and determine an audio file length to compute a default output rate which is used to adjust a recorded output rate to match the input speech rate when the type of speech is recorded and alternate text is unavailable.